

The Rules Applied – July '23

If you've played DeBell or any other public course, you've probably found your ball in a lie which is somewhat less than ideal. And your non-club friends always have an easy answer when they say – that's ground under repair. But is it?

My ball is lying on a big area of dirt in the middle of the fairway. That's gotta be ground under repair, right? Sorry, no. Big areas of dirt do not automatically qualify as ground under repair.

What if there is a white line painted around the area? Ah, that changes everything. Ground under repair is any area marked by the course or the tournament committee as such. White paint or stakes are typically used. Or the area can simply be described, as we sometimes do in connection with our tournaments.

My ball came to rest in a little trench or groove near the green on hole 5. Do I get relief? You are in luck, here. Even if not marked, any hole made by the maintenance staff in setting up or maintaining the course counts as ground under repair. This includes holes or trenches made for laying pipes, so yes, you do get relief. Unfortunately, this does not include aeration holes (See Definition of Ground Under Repair).

What about animal holes? These are ground under repair, right? Well, no. But both animal holes and ground under repair are classified as abnormal course conditions and the same rules apply to both. (Abnormal course conditions also include temporary water and immovable obstructions, both of which have been discussed in previous rules discussions.) Animal holes include the loose material dug out of the hole, any worn-down track leading into the hole, and any area of ground which is pushed up or altered as a result of the animal digging (See Definition of Animal Hole).

So, if I get a free drop by reason of ground under repair or an animal hole, what do I do? First, determine your nearest point of relief (no closer to the hole) by taking your stance with the club you intend to use. Mark that spot with a tee or other object. Second, take the longest club in your bag and measure 1 club length, again making sure you are no closer to the hole. Finally, drop your ball from knee height within the relief area. If the ball rolls out of the area, then drop again; and if it rolls out a second time, then place the ball on the spot that it hit the ground (Rule 16).